APPENDIX A

Claims As Amended

1   1.   (Amended)   A method for determining part replacement related

2   information by an end user, comprising:

3   obtaining an associated identifier of a first part [by the end user];

4   automatically coupling by a scanner interface the identifier of the first part to a

5   network enabled browser;

6   automatically connecting by the browser over a network connection to a remote

7   database to retrieve replacement related information for the first part which identifies

8   replacement related information for a second part which should be replaced along

9   with the first part, such database searchable by the associated identifier; and

10   automatically displaying by the browser for the end user the retrieved

11   replacement related information for the first part.

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1   2.   (Amended)   A method according to claim 1, wherein the identifier of the

2   first part is a selected one of a UPC identifier, product-identifier mark, and textual

3   product identifier.

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1   3.   (Unchanged) A method according to claim 1, further comprising:

2   obtaining at least one user preference; and

3   arranging the retrieved replacement related information according to the at least

4   one user preference.

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4. (Unchanged) A method according to claim 3, wherein the user preference is a selected one of limiting price, limiting distance to travel to obtain a replacement part, limiting shipping time for the replacement part, limiting time to effect part replacement, and only displaying a vendor having the replacement part in stock.

5. (Unchanged) A method according to claim 4, further comprising:
categorizing the retrieved replacement related information into plural categories;
wherein such categories are sorted according to the at least one user preference.

6. (Unchanged) A method according to claim 3, further comprising:
identifying at least one provider within the retrieved replacement related information having a replacement part in stock; and
prominently displaying the at least one provider;
wherein prominently displaying includes sorting the retrieved replacement related information so that the at least one provider is at the top of such retrieved information.

7. (Unchanged) A method according to claim 1, in which the network connection is a link with the Internet, the method further comprising:
providing the associated identifier in a predetermined format, such format being a selected one of a bar-code format, a product-identifier mark, and a verbal identifier;
wherein a portable bar-code scanner is utilized to obtain the associated identifier.

1   8.   (Amended)   A method according to claim 1, the method further

2   comprising:

3   contacting a cross-reference hub;

4   searching the cross-reference hub with the associated identifier to obtain at least

5   one additional product identifier; and

6   automatically searching the remote database with the at least one additional

7   product identifier to retrieve replacement related information for the first part.

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1   9.   (Unchanged) A method according to claim 8, wherein the associated

2   identifier is a non-unique product category reference, and the at least one additional

3   product identifier is partially unique.

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1   10.   (Unchanged) A method according to claim 8, further comprising:

2   semantically analyzing the retrieved replacement related information; and

3   reorganizing the retrieved replacement related information according such

4   analysis.

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1   11.   (Unchanged) An article of manufacture, comprising:

2   a computer readable medium;

3   wherein encoded on the computer readable medium are instructions capable of

4   causing a processor to perform the steps of claim 1.

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1   12.   (Amended)   A method according to claim 1, in which the replacement

2   related information includes related part data identifying the second part [, where a

3   related part is one that requires replacement along with the part].

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1   13.   (Amended)   A method according to claim 1, further comprising:

2   determining a geographic location for the first part;

3   identifying vendors of a replacement part for the first part, each vendor having a

4   geographic location; and

5   sorting the vendors according to their geographic proximity to the first part.

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1   14.   (Unchanged) A method according to claim 13, further comprising:

2   providing a proximity preference, such preference set to user election if such

3   election has been made, otherwise to a predetermined value; and

4   culling the retrieved replacement information according to the proximity

5   preference.

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1   15.   (Amended)   A method according to claim 13, further comprising:

2   receiving user-specified price terms for a replacement part for the first part;

3   identifying, from the retrieved replacement information, a sales price offered by

4   vendors for the replacement part; and

5   culling the retrieved replacement information according to the user-specified

6   price terms.

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1   16.   (Unchanged) An article of manufacture, comprising:

2   a computer readable medium;

3   wherein encoded on the computer readable medium are instructions capable of

4   causing a processor to perform the steps of claim 15.

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1   17.   (Amended)   A method according to claim 1, further comprising:

2   receiving user-specified price terms for a replacement part for the first part;

3   identifying, from the retrieved replacement information, a sales price offered by

4   vendors for the replacement part; and

5   culling the retrieved replacement information according to the user-specified

6   price terms.

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1   18.   (Amended)   A method according to claim 1, the method further

2   comprising:

3   retrieving from the remote database replacement related concerns, such

4   concerns including warning and suggestions for a user seeking to replace the first

5   part;

6   retrieving from the remote database identification of related parts requiring

7   replacement along with the first part;

8   displaying the replacement related concerns to the user; and

9   notifying the user of the related parts requiring replacement.

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1   19.   (Unchanged) A method according to claim 18, wherein an expert system

2   interactively displays the replacement related concerns and notification of related

3   parts requiring replacement.

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1   20.   (Amended)   A system for determining part replacement related

2   information by an end user, comprising:

3   a scanner for scanning an associated identifier of a part;

4   a network-enabled browsing arrangement; and

5   a scanner interface facilitating communication between the scanner interface and

6   the network-enabled browsing arrangement, such communication including

7   transferring the associated identifier to the browsing arrangement;

8   wherein the browser automatically connects to a remote database over a network

9   to retrieve replacement related information for the first part which identifies

10   replacement related information for a second part which should be replaced along

11   with the first part.

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1   21.   (Unchanged) A system according to claim 20, further comprising:

2   a computing device comprising a processor capable of being directed to process

3   commands stored in a program memory, and an input/output port;

4   wherein

5   the scanner is in communication with the input/output port,

6   the browsing arrangement is provided as a first sequence of program

7   commands stored in the program memory for execution by the processor, and

8   the scanner interface is provided as a second sequence of program

9   commands stored in the program memory for execution by the processor, where the

10   scanner interface receives the scanned associated identifier through the input/output

11   port and provides such identifier to the browsing arrangement.

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1   22.   (Unchanged) A system according to claim 20, wherein the scanner is

2   incorporated into the computing device.

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1   23.   (Amended)   A system, comprising:

2   means for scanning an associated identifier of a first part by the end user;

3   means for automatically coupling by a scanner interface the scanned identifier of

4   the first part to a network enabled browser;

5   means for automatically connecting by the browser over a network connection to

6   a remote database to retrieve replacement related information for the first part which

7   identifies replacement related information for a second part which should be

8   replaced along with the first part, such database searchable by the associated

9   identifier; and

10   means for automatically displaying by the browser for the end user the retrieved

11   replacement related information for the first part.

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1   24.   (Unchanged) A system according to claim 23, further comprising:

2   means for obtaining at least one user preference; and

3   means for arranging the retrieved replacement related information according to

4   the at least one user preference.

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1   25.   (New) A method for determining part replacement related, comprising:

2   obtaining an identifier of a first part with a scanner communicatively coupled to

3   an expert system;

4   automatically connecting by the expert over a network connection to at least one

5   remote database to retrieve, based at least on the identifier, replacement related

6   information for the first part;

7   receiving candidate results from the at least one remote database; and

8   processing by the expert system of the candidate results to identify one or more

9   replacements for the first part.

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1   26.   (New) The method of claim 25, wherein the replacement related

2   information for the first part includes replacement related information for a second

3   part suggested to be replaced along with the first part.

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1   27.   (New) The method of claim 25, further comprising:

2   displaying in a web browser a web page identifying the one or more

3   replacements for the first part.

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1   28.   (Unchanged) The method of claim 25, further comprising:

2   obtaining at least one user preference; and

3   culling by the expert system of retrieved replacement related information

4   according to the at least one user preference.

29. (New) The method of claim 28, wherein the user preference is a selected one of limiting price, limiting distance to travel to obtain a replacement part, limiting shipping time for the replacement part, limiting time to effect part replacement, and only displaying a vendor having the replacement part in stock.

30. (New) The method of claim 29, further comprising:

displaying in a web browser a web page identifying the one or more replacements for the first part satisfying the at least one user preference.